

## In this issue:

<b>TG updates</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Meet Tracy Samsel, lead for TG’s customer assistance team .....	1
Call for papers: TG announces a new publication on enrollment management and requests manuscripts.....	3
TG releases updated <i>Your Guide to Borrowing for Education</i> .....	4
<b>Trends and issues</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Wish your graduates well with effective exit counseling .....	5
Question of the week .....	6
<b>This, that, and the other</b> .....	<b>7</b>

## Tip<sup>of</sup> the Week

Graduation is around the corner. Ensure your students have a stronger financial future by offering them comprehensive information on student loan repayment. TG describes borrower obligations and repayment options in the “Managing Repayment” section of *TG Online*. Refer your students to it at [www.tgslc.org/borrowers/repay/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/borrowers/repay/index.cfm).

## TG updates

### Meet Tracy Samsel, lead for TG’s customer assistance team



Financial aid isn’t a mystery, but it can seem that way to students, especially those just embarking on a college degree. Can I consolidate private and federal education loans? Why would my loans suddenly come due? What does interest capitalization mean? Helping students and others solve the financial aid “puzzle” is the stock-in-trade of TG’s customer assistance team, a call center staffed by an assortment of industry veterans who make it their business to be comprehensive, empathetic, and helpful.

Students aren’t the only customers the customer assistance team helps. Schools, lenders, and other business partners form a significant portion of the team’s call volume. Team members answer business partner questions on a wide variety of industry issues like the return of Title IV funds or disbursement processes.

Annually, TG’s customer assistance representatives field more than 150,000 customer queries, most by phone but some by letter or e-mail. During peak season,

the ten-member team can answer more than 1,000 calls a day. Questions cover many topics, but generally center on policies and procedures of the FFELP as well as TG's products and services, including TG Loans By Web™.

By all indications, customer assistance is highly successful at what it does: in FY 2006, the team scored an overall 4.8 customer satisfaction score on a scale of 1 to 5. Customers regularly praise the group for its diplomacy and knowledge. And repeat callers, impressed by the level of service in their first call, will often ask to be referred to the same customer assistance staffer.

### **Creating a model call center**

To help shape customer assistance into such an effective team, TG relies on financial aid professionals like team lead Tracy Samsel. Equal parts coach and mentor, project director and quality assurance check, Samsel sets the tenor for the team. She's found that a strong call center is one that supports the growth of each of its members.

"A team can be successful if each team member is respected, enjoys the work that he or she does, and works in an environment that is professional but also fun and relaxed," said Samsel. "I try to match specific projects to each team member's skills, so that, in addition to answering calls, each team member has variety in his or her work. Ideally, this project work helps to grow the team member's knowledge and skill set."

For her part, Samsel finds inspiration in some of the very things that others find daunting about financial aid — the frequent change in regulations and procedure.

"I like the variety of my job duties and the fact that the industry is ever changing," said Samsel. "I'm always learning new information or helping to implement a change in our processes because of new regs."

To create such a strong model of a call center, Samsel gets ample help from fellow team mates, all of whom hold themselves to a high standard of accountability. Call center staff pride themselves on answering questions quickly and accurately. They're helped in their work by effective training on the federal regs and the premium TG places on connecting with the customer.

"I'm lucky because I supervise one of the best, most professional teams in the industry," said Samsel. "Each team member has a passion for providing superior customer service and strives to help meet TG's vision of that experience every day."

### **To learn more**

To contact TG customer assistance with questions of your own, you may call (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to [cust.assist@tgslc.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgslc.org).

## **Call for papers: TG announces a new publication on enrollment management and requests manuscripts**

In December 2007, TG will publish the first edition of a refereed journal on enrollment management, titled *Enrollment Management Journal: Student Access, Finance, and Success in Higher Education*. TG is working in partnership with the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In publishing the work of researchers and practitioners, the journal aims to raise discussion on campus enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, and, ultimately, help improve efforts in all these areas. The journal will focus especially on:

- issues of student access and success; and
- the role financial aid plays in whether students achieve their educational goals.

Along with its empirical or conceptual manuscripts, the journals will accept other work, including:

- highlights of award-winning dissertations or programs,
- book reviews,
- commentaries, and
- other short pieces that highlight timely issues in the field of enrollment management.

Co-editors have been named for the journals. They are Barbara A. Lacost, Ph.D., and Brent D. Cejda, Ph.D., professors in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Educational Administration.

### **How to contribute**

Authors should submit manuscripts for the journal via e-mail. Manuscripts should come in Microsoft Word® format and be sent to [EMJ@unl.edu](mailto:EMJ@unl.edu). For the inaugural issue, preference will be given to articles received by June 15, 2007.

Ordinarily, manuscripts should be no more than 30 pages in length, and each article should be summarized in an abstract of not more than 150 words. Manuscripts should follow the style of the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Manuscripts are accepted for consideration with the understanding that they are original material and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Three referees will evaluate submitted manuscripts anonymously. Their goal is to complete the review process within 90 days of receipt of manuscripts.

### **To find out more**

If you have questions, please visit the journal's Web site on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/emj](http://www.tgslc.org/emj). You may also gather information from the journal's editors.

Contact Barbara Lacost at (402) 472-0988, or send an e-mail message to [Blacost1@unl.edu](mailto:Blacost1@unl.edu). Contact Brent D. Cejda at (402) 472-0989, or send an e-mail message to [bcejda2@unl.edu](mailto:bcejda2@unl.edu).

## TG releases updated *Your Guide to Borrowing for Education*



TG provides a comprehensive series of brochures and publications that detail many facets of the FFELP. The TG brochure titled, *Your Guide to Borrowing for an Education*, is one such brochure. In concise, simple language, the brochure spells out the advantages of the FFELP, provides a synopsis of how the program works, and specifies the various loan offerings including the subsidized Federal Stafford Loan, unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loan, and the Federal PLUS Loan for parents of dependent students and for graduate/professional students.

The brochure has been updated in accordance with changes required by the Higher Education Act (HEA). On July 1, 2007, loan limits will increase for Federal Subsidized Stafford loans. The brochure's Stafford Loan Maximums chart details what amounts students can borrow by year and by student type, including graduate and professional students.

Consider offering the brochure as a handout in your office lobby, or mail it to new and continuing students.

### Inside the brochure

The publication guides borrowers through many of the financial and procedural questions that can make the Stafford and PLUS loan programs seem complicated. Here are particular highlights from the publication:

- **Interest rate and fees:** Provides new interest rates effective July 1, 2006 for Stafford and for PLUS loans; defines particular fees that apply.
- **How to apply:** Describes the first step for all federal financial aid purposes: the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA; lists Web address information and phone contacts to begin application process.
- **Loan amounts:** Defines the federally-mandated borrowing limits for both types of loans.
- **Who qualifies:** Specifies who is eligible to borrow Stafford and PLUS loans and under what conditions; includes eligibility requirements for graduate and professional students for PLUS loans.

- **Paying back the loan:** Describes the general terms by which many borrowers pay back Stafford and PLUS loans, including the minimum payment amount, term limits, time by which to begin repayment, and other details.
- **Stafford Loan Maximums chart:** Lists maximum amounts for Stafford loans by year and for aggregate amounts; updated to reflect HEA-required changes effective July 1, 2007.

### To order

The brochure is available in both English and Spanish. To order either version of the publication, visit the "Online Forms/Publications" ordering page on *TG Online* at [www.tgslc.org/forms/index.cfm](http://www.tgslc.org/forms/index.cfm).

### To learn more

You can always direct your student and parent borrowers to other sources of help as well as give them this handy brochure. For questions about the FFELP, contact TG's customer assistance team at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to [cust.assist@tgslc.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgslc.org).

## Trends and issues

### Wish your graduates well with effective exit counseling

Graduation is around the corner. One of the best graduation gifts you can give your students is exit student loan counseling. A strong session of exit counseling can cement your graduates' understanding of their student loan obligations, or even give them a few tools to secure a brighter financial future.

Exit counseling is a federal requirement for anyone who has a Stafford loan. A typical exit counseling session is designed to make your students aware of the consequences of default and otherwise help prepare them to successfully pay off their loans.

If your school offers exit counseling in person, electronically, or by mail, ensure that it meets standards set by the Department of Education. The *Federal Student Aid Handbook* enumerates many of these specifications. The *Common Manual* includes them in a special section (4.4.C) devoted to "Exit Counseling."

### An exit counseling checklist

Here is an abbreviated list of what a good exit counseling session should include. Be sure to refer to the *Common Manual*, section 4.4.C, for more complete information. Additional information that the Department recommends including in exit counseling can be found in the 2006-07 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, Volume 2, Chapter 6, pp. 2-103 to 2-105.

Note that electronic exit counseling services like [Mapping Your Future™](#) take care of much of these details in their program. However, it's always good to be aware of what your students should know in case you need to include this information in other material you provide.

Be sure your exit counseling service offers the following to your students:

- Average anticipated monthly repayment amounts based on the student's indebtedness or on the average indebtedness of Stafford loan borrowers at the same school or in the same program of study at the same school
- Available repayment options including standard, graduated, extended, and income-sensitive repayment plans and loan consolidation
- Debt-management strategies
- Conditions under which the student borrower may defer or forbear repayment or obtain a full or partial discharge of a loan
- Consequences of default, including adverse credit reports, federal offset, and litigation
- The use of the Federal Stafford Loan Master Promissory Note (Stafford MPN)
- The obligation to repay the full amount of the loan — even if the student borrower has not completed the program or is unable to obtain employment upon completion
- The availability of the Student Loan Ombudsman's Office
- The availability of Title IV loan information in the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS)

Remember that you are required to maintain a record to substantiate compliance with exit counseling requirements for each student.

### To learn more

For questions about exit counseling, contact TG's customer assistance team at (800) 845-6267, or send an e-mail message to [cust.assist@tgsic.org](mailto:cust.assist@tgsic.org).

### Question of the week

**Q.:** If a student was enrolled at least half-time in the spring and intends to enroll at least half-time in the fall, but enrolls less than half-time in the summer, is the student covered by the summer bridge extension? Does the school have to provide exit counseling for the student in the summer?

**Note:** This question was asked during the "Taking the Heat Out of Summer" session at the TG Annual Conference on April 4. The following answer,

obtained from the ED regional office in Dallas, provides clarification on this issue.

**A.:** The summer bridge extension allows a student borrower to stay in an in-school status — or, if the student has already entered repayment, in an in-school deferment — through the summer if the student was enrolled at least half-time in the spring and intends to enroll at least half-time in the fall. If the student actually enrolls in summer, but is less than half-time, or enrolls but withdraws, the student is *still* covered by the summer bridge extension. The student is considered to remain in an in-school or in-school deferment status, as applicable, through the summer. In addition, the school is not required to provide exit counseling to the student, unless the student does not enroll in the fall term at least half-time.

It is important to note that the summer bridge extension does *not* apply if a student does not enroll at least half time in a summer term that is a regularly scheduled period of enrollment at the school or for the student's program, i.e., a term that students in that school or program are expected or required to attend. In this case, if a student did not enroll at least half-time in a required summer term, the student would not be considered to remain in an in-school or in-school deferment status, as applicable, through the summer, and the school would be required to provide exit counseling to the student.

### **Do you have a question?**

If you have a question that needs an answer, feel free to *Ask TG™*. *Ask TG* is TG's online query tool for borrowers, schools, and lenders. It includes a database of frequently asked questions about financial aid, student loan processing, and TG's products and services. To submit a question to *Ask TG*, visit [tgslc.custhelp.com](https://tgslc.custhelp.com).

## **This, that, and the other**

Two recent studies look closer at the graduation rates of community college students who intend to graduate from a four-year institution. One study tracked 1,700 students who entered community colleges in Ohio in academic year 1998-99. When they began college, these students indicated that they planned to earn four-year degrees. Six years later, only 20.6 percent of them had graduated with a bachelor's degree or were working toward such a degree.

The second paper drew on data from the National Education Longitudinal Study, which tracked thousands of students from 1988 until 2000. The paper focused on a group of 641 students who had entered community college in 1992 and later transferred to four-year institutions as juniors. Once in a four-year setting, the students were just as likely as any student to graduate — coming from a two-year college did not appear to affect their completion rates.

Both studies were recently presented at the American Educational Research Association in Chicago. Neither study is conclusive; however, authors of the reports

say their findings underscore the need for state governments, community colleges, and four-year institutions to offer students stronger resources for making a successful transition to four-year schools.

The source for this week's "This, that, and the other" is located at <http://chronicle.com/news/article/1985/studies-examine-how-starting-at-a-community-college-affects-the-path-to-a-4-year-degree>.

Note that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* requires a paid subscription to review some content.



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